

# Training and Performance: Can Job Fit Act as a Mediator? A Review

**Zahid H. Bhat**

Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Business & Financial Studies  
University of Kashmir, J&K (India)

**Dr. Riyaz A. Rainayee**

Professor  
Department of Business & Financial Studies  
University of Kashmir, J&K (India)

## Abstract

There is a clear connection between employee training, person-job fit and performance. The association between training and job performance has been the main concern of scholars and practitioners over the times. This paper presents a review of the relationship between training and performance and also examines the mediating role that person job fit may play in the relationship between these two. Literature suggests that training to a big extent is a determinant of employee performance. The review has also revealed the importance and purpose of training in organizations, and how it contributes to employee performance. The review so far, reveals a seeming consensus in the belief that there is a positive relationship between training and employee performance and also that training develops the skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies of the employees. In addition, person job fit was found to be associated with positive employee outcomes in terms of increased employee performance, job satisfaction, and motivation. Based on the review of past studies, this paper proposes the mediating role of person job fit in determining the indirect relationship that may exist between training and performance.

**Keywords:** Training, Person-Job Fit, Performance Mediation

## Introduction

In the global age of today, organisations looking to improve their productivity and efficiency with regard to providing goods and services are gradually looking for ways and means to increase employee performance and efficiency. Training programmes and skills development courses, often a target of financial constraints, may help organisations achieve their premeditated goals and objectives. The constant need for both individual and organisational development can be drawn to many demands, including upholding dominance in the marketplace, increasing employee knowledge and skills, and increasing both efficiency and productivity. A new employee faces little difficulty in his office assignments initially and also existing employees experience difficulties in their tasks due to changing times. So, the new employee requires a roadmap from the senior experienced employees and also from an outsider who is expert on those specific areas. Thus, organisations conduct training programmes to update and improve employees' knowledge, skills and abilities demanded by the job (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2012). Organisations have realized

that training now-a-days is not a required expenditure, but an essential investment that helps employees to familiarize into an organisation's premeditated plans (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2012). Training is among the dominant methods to increase the efficiency of employees and collaborating organisational goals to the newly recruit.

Training refers to the acquisition of abilities and knowledge required for the performance of a specific role (Okereke & Nnenna, 2011). Noe *et al.* (2006) defined training "a firm's planned effort to facilitate the learning of job-related knowledge, skills and behaviour by employees". In the opinion of Edwin B. Flippo, training is the act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job. Training is a planned learning experience designed to bring about permanent change in an individual's knowledge, attitudes, or skills (Campbell *et al.*, 1970). Training is a key element for improved organisational performance through the increased level of individual employee competence and a comprehensive arrangement for the improvement of employees' technical and developmental skills in the organisation. Apparently, Diamantidis & Chatzoglou (2012) maintain that the usage of materials by the trainees during the training process results in an increase in their job related knowledge and skills which helps them in the efficient performance on their jobs. The most significant benefit of training is accuracy in job obligations and responsibilities as well as increase in employees' competency (Robinson and Robinson, 1995). Finally the benefits of an effectively employed training programme are i) an instant upsurge in the knowledge level of employees (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2012), brings employees to the desired level of performance for the job, improves the determination, creativity and excellence of work of employees, commitment for achieving the objectives of the organisation and has the propensity of increasing effectiveness among employees' inside the organisation. The association between training and job performance has been the main concern of scholars and practitioners over the times. Hermen (1979) marked that, 'specific job performance requires specific competencies which generally involve a combination of knowledge and skill expertise. Performers must have acquired both... in order to be successful on the job'. This is the area where training is the prime solution, providing an opportunity for the performer to develop required competencies. The purpose of training is to attain a specific change in the behavior of trained employees and enable them to perform better. It is a systematic and planned procedure of imparting and providing learning experience in order to bring improvement in the performance of employees and enable them to make their contribution in greater measure in meeting the objectives and goals of an organisation. Rowden (2002), suggest that training may also be an

efficient tool for improving ones job satisfaction, as employee better performance leads to appreciation by the top management, hence employee feel more adjusted with his job. Scott, Clothier and Spiegel (1977) argued that training is the crux of better organisational management, as it makes employees more efficient and effective. Guest (1997) mentioned in his study that training and development programmes, as one of the vital human resource management practice, positively affects the quality of the workers knowledge, skills and capability and thus result in higher employee performance on their jobs. Training not only improves the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform the current job but also enhance the knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior employee and organisational performance (Wright and Geroy, 2001). As mentioned by Arnoff (1971), training sessions accelerate the initiative ability and creativity of the workforce and facilitate to avoid human resource obsolescence, which may occur because of demographic factors such as age, attitude or the inability to cope with the technological changes. Most of the previous studies provide the evidence that there is a strong positive relationship between human resource management practices and employee performance (Purcell *et al.*, 2003).

### Employee Performance

The nature of job performance in an organisation depends on the demands of the job, the mission and objectives of the organisation and the beliefs of the organisation about which behaviors are most valued (Motowidlo and Schmit, 1999). Thus, studies have established that the relative importance given to task and contextual performance behaviors have important implications for the definition of performance. Consequently, two factors have received the most recognition among the facets of job performance, i.e. task performance and contextual performance (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). Task performance means the fundamental and official behaviors and actions elaborated in the job description. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) define task performance as "the proficiency with which job incumbents perform activities that are formally recognized as part of their jobs; activities that contribute to the organisation's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technological process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services" (Borman and Motowidlo, p.73) and are usually regarded as elementary obligations that employees need to perform as they are hired in exchange for their reimbursement packages (Rousseau & Mc Lean Parks, 1993). Task performance encompasses the accomplishment of tasks which are within an employee's job depiction (Murphy, 1989). 'Contextual Performance', on the other hand, indicates the behaviors which sustains the setting in which the core job tasks operate

(Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Contextual behaviors are vital in realizing organisational goals (Allen & Rush, 1998). The concept of contextual behaviour magnifies the performance domain to incorporate a diversity of non-job specific behaviors (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) and involves the framework within which the core transformation and maintenance activities are carried out (Beffort and Hatrup, 2003). It incorporates key aspects of the constructs like extra-role behaviour, organisational citizenship behaviour, organisational spontaneity, and personal initiative to define a comprehensive facet of work performance separate from basic task actions. It is usually theorized as being under the psychological management of employees and is very less confined by the characteristics of the job (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Contextual performance is indispensable for an organisation as it facilitates the accomplishment of organisational goals and subsequently the performance of the organisation.

Three elementary conventions are associated with difference between the task and contextual performance. (1) Actions pertinent to task performance differ between job tasks whereas activities relevant to contextual behaviour are quite analogous among different jobs; (2) task performance is linked with the capacity and capability, while as contextual performance is linked with behavior and enthusiasm; (3) task performance is organized and is comprised of in role behaviour, while as contextual performance is flexible and comprises extra role behaviour (Sonnentag and Frese, 2002). Thus, studies have established that the importance conferred to task and contextual performance has important connotations for defining job performance used in framing personnel decisions and policies. The theory of job performance by Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit (1997) predicts that individual differences in personality and cognitive ability variables, in combination with learning experiences, lead to variability in knowledge, skills, and work habits that mediate effects of personality and cognitive ability on job performance. An especially important aspect of this theory is that it predicts that the kinds of knowledge, skills, work habits, and traits that are associated with task performance are different from the kinds that are associated with contextual performance (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). Both task as well as contextual performance describes the explicit behaviour of individuals (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). These behaviors can be illustrated from the influence the behaviour has on the outcome (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Thus, the line drawn between behaviour and outcome emphasizes that performance is described by the behaviors and the outcome is the corollary of behaviour (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993).

## Person-Job Fit and Performance

Identifying and recruiting employees who not only possess the right sets of knowledge and skills but also embrace values similar to those of the organisation are critical for organisations to succeed in achieving their goals (Judge and Ferris, 1992; Kristof, 1996). According to Drucker (1955), every employee has a crystallised and complex set of needs, values, ways of perceiving the world and his personality which he brings with him to his work place. He is thus not a 'raw mould'. He tries to fit his psychological make-up with the environment of the organisation. The fact that his psychological characteristics influence his behaviour suggests that his job behaviour and ultimately his job performance will also be influenced by these characteristics. That is, in hiring a worker, one always hires the whole man, and this explains why human effectiveness in work is essential for improvement in performance and output of an organisation. Person-Job (P-J) fit, especially Demand-Abilities (D-A) fit, is applicable to an individual's compatibility with a specific job. Employees who possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that match the requirements of their job are expected to perform their job effectively. P-J fit, especially Needs-Supplies (N-S) fit, is achieved when employees' needs are supplied by the job or organisation, in which case they are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction and be highly committed to the organisation (Vogel and Feldman, 2009). Person-job fit can be a reasonable predictor of job performance because individuals with high person-job fit had found to have positive work outcome (Edwards, 1991). Additionally, the theory of congruence by Barrett (1978) as cited by Lawrence (2004) explained that person-job fit as the fit that may exists between individual preferences and the job requirements or the knowledge skills and ability (KSAs). Thus when congruency exists between one's preference and the KSAs, it will lead to motivational outcome (Edwards, 1991; Barrett, 1978) and this is eminent in order to have greater job performance. Furthermore, a large number of empirical researches have established that person-job fit is important for positive work outcome. Person-job fit had found to be positively related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, task performance and contextual performance, acceptance of job offer, tension reduction as well as reduced intentions to leave (Cable & De Rue, 2002; Saks & Ash forth, 2002; Cable & Edwards, 2004; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). Bhat (2014) maintained that a positive change in the level of employee performance could be interpreted from the best fit of a person to the job. Caldwell and O'Reilly (1990) established that fit was positively associated with satisfaction and performance. Thus, an employee who feels satisfied at work will be keener to participate in extra-role activities, or if she/he is treated fairly she/he will also be keener to engage in contextual

behaviour. The same outcome will occur if they believe that by engaging in these actions, they also increase the possibility of personal gains (e.g. promotion or pay rise). Additionally person-job-fit is found to be associated with satisfaction, turnover and performance (O'Reilly III, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1990). In a separate study, person-job fit found to be related to productivity and commitment (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1992), job performance (Bhat, 2014; Greenberg, 2002) and having positive effects on performance, job satisfaction, and reduction in job stress, motivation, attendance and retention (Edwards, 1991). High P-J fit often arises from a good match of employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities with job demands, consequently, it is predicted that people with a high P-J fit will have better task performance than those with a low P-J fit. A large body of empirical research has supported the effect of P-J fit and important work attitudes and behaviors. For example, P-J fit has been found to be positively related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational identification, task performance, contextual performance, intent to accept job offer, and to lower strain, and intentions to quit (Cable and De Rue, 2002; Cable and Edwards, 2004; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Saks and Ashforth, 2002). Regarding job performance, Brown (1996), citing Lawler (1986), Kahn (1990), and Pfeffer (1994), argued that employee work behaviors should be categorized as consequences of job involvement, and hypothesized that job involvement affected employees' motivation and effort, which subsequently determined performance.

However, in the meta-analysis conducted by Kristof-Brown *et al.*, (2005), P-J fit only has a modest correlation with overall performance ( $r = .14$ , 0.20), researchers have further noted that the correlation of fit-performance was higher when performance was distinguished by task performance and contextual performance (Schmitt *et al.*, 2008). Vogel and Feldman (2009) in their empirical results supported the positive effect of P-J fit on both task and contextual performance. Interestingly Kristoff *et al.*, (2005) found that when person-job fit and person-organisation fit were tested on job performance, the relationship tend to have a modest correlations which contradicts with the findings by Li and Hung (2010) where person-job fit was found to be highly correlated with job performance. Nevertheless, in relations to other attitudinal outcome, person-job fit is still demonstrating higher correlation than person-organisation fit (Kristoff-Brown, Jansen & Colbert, 2002; Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

### **Mediating Role of Person-Job (P-J) Fit**

Training effects employee's job performance positively. It also increases the efficiency of work and contributes to the success of organisation. Importance of training cannot be

neglected in any organisation worldwide. Imparting training is crucial to the success of an organisation; however, it is an expensive affair. Therefore the effect of training on performance of employees is an issue that merits attention. By the help of training employees become proficient in their jobs and they become able to give better results. If the right person for the right job is not selected then training will be having no effect on the performance of the employees. Training affects the performance positively only and when right person for the right job is selected supporting the notion that says 'good training will not fix for bad selection'. Organisations utilize their resources to establish a good fit between persons and the jobs because they think that some jobs better suit some persons than others. Studies have found that person-job fit can have influence on job performance (Mosley, 2002; Bhat, 2014). In an overview of person job literature and research, Edwards (1991) suggests that job and person operates as joint determinants of a person and organisational outcomes. Past studies on the link between person-job fit & performance also contain mixed results (Lauver & Kristoff-Brown, 2001; Cable & De Rue, 2002), indicating lack of consensus among researchers on the relationship among the variables.

We propose in our study that person job fit mediates the relationship between employee training and employee job performance. We also put forward that person job fit perceptions are directly influenced by the temperament of one's skill, knowledge and ability. However, training is relatively important and contributes towards a feeling of job fit among the employees. Additionally, it is through these feelings of job fit that an employee is determined to perform the job well.

### **Research Gap**

The review has revealed the importance and purpose of training in organisations, and how it contributes to employee performance. The information, thus far, reveals a seeming consensus in the belief that there is a positive relationship between training and employee performance and also that training develops the skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies of the employees. Moreover, studies had found that person-job fit can have influence on job performance, the amount of research is still limited (Mosley, 2002). In addition given the variations in results on the relationship between person-job fit and job performance (Edwards, 1991), studies on the relationship between person-job fit and job performance has therefore yet to come to similar agreement (Taylor, Locke, Lee, & Gist, 1984). Similarly past studies on the link between person-job fit and performance have contained mixed results (Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001; Cable and De Rue, 2002). Nonetheless, there has been relatively little research linking P-J fit to both task and contextual performance although



some researchers have noted the need to understand the relationship between P-J fit and other aspects of the performance domain. Also, previous studies established that both the facets of performance, i.e. task performance and contextual performance advocate overall organisational efficacy (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). In spite of this, relatively minimal investigation has studied the factors which facilitate the relationship between employee performance and organisational effectiveness.

## Conclusion

Training was found having a significant role in the development of organizations, enhancing employee performance as well as increasing employee productivity, and ultimately putting organisations in the best position to face competition and stay at pinnacle. Moreover, person-job fit was found to be positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, task performance and contextual performance, acceptance of job offer, tension reduction as well as reduced intentions to leave (e.g. Cable & De Rue, 2002; Saks & Ash forth, 2002; Cable & Edwards, 2004; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Also, the review suggests the mediating role that person job fit can play in between the relation of training and performance. This proposed mediation relationship of training, job fit, and employee performance requires a thorough examination of all antecedent-mediator, mediator-outcome, and antecedent-outcome relationship to establish whether job fit mediates partially or fully the impact of training on performance. Future conceptual research on the relationship stated above, may offer possibilities for empirical research. Further, the proposed relationship between training and performance through the mediation effect of person job fit can be tested in various contexts with varying samples as there is no specified population upon whom the relation can be confirmed. This relationship can be tested with service as well as manufacturing industry. This all can be established through future empirical research by taking the past review into consideration.

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